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INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Korea

SUBJECT The Young Friends Party

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SUPPLEMENT TO
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1. The principal leaders of the Young Friends Party (Ch'ong-u Tang 靑友堂), a faction of the Ch'ondo religious sect, are the following:

North Korea group

KIM Ki-chön (金起田) 1 - Chairman
KIM Chung-chu (金廷柱)
KIM Ch'ang-yoh (金達鎭) 2

South Korea group

CHO Ki-kum (趙基琴) 3 - Chairman
KIM Pyöng-sun (金炳淳) 4
KIM Pyöng-chae (金秉載) 5
YI Sök-chu (李錫柱) 6

This document is hereby regraded to
CONFIDENTIAL in accordance with the
letter of 16 October 1978 from the
Director of Central Intelligence to the
Archivist of the United States.
Next Review Date: 2008

2. Responsibility for the direction of Young Friends Party activities throughout Korea rests with KIM Ki-chön as head of the Religious Controlling Office (宗理院), established shortly after his arrival in Pyongyang in the spring of 1948. His authority is fully acknowledged by CHO KI-KUM and other leaders of the party in the South.
3. In late April 1949 members of the Young Friends Party in South Korea drafted and sent to Pyongyang a resolution supporting formation of the Fatherland Unification Front, sponsored by the North Korea regime. The following names appeared on the document:

CHO Ki-kum (趙基琴)
KIM Pyöng-sun (金炳淳)
PAEK Chung-pin (白重鎭)
KIM Ui-ch'an (金維贊)
IM Mun-ho (林文浩)
YI Hae-sök (李海錫)
KIM Chung-chöng (金仲正)
NA Sang-sin (羅善信)
KIM Yong-ha (金容夏)

Document No. 3

NO CHANGE in Class. ☐

☒ RECLASSIFIED

Class. CHANGED TO: TS S C

DCA Memo. 4 Apr 77

Auth: DDAL/EG. 77/1783

Date: 16 MAY 1978 By: 073

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25X1A

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

-2-

25X1A

4. Despite his support of the Fatherland Unification Front resolution, CHO Ki-kum in early July received a stern reprimand from KIM Ki-chon, through a liaison officer from the North, for permitting recent crack-downs by the South Korean police to interfere with the activities of the Young Friends Party⁸. It was reiterated that the directives of the Religious Controlling Office are to be followed by all party members, regardless of counter-pressures which through cleverness might be avoided. In the face of the combined pressure of the North Korean leaders and of the South Korea police, CHO has been almost convinced that he should withdraw from active participation in Young Friends activities.
5. Resistance to dictates of the Religious Controlling Office has persisted in the National Assistance Party (Po-kuk Tang 輔國黨), which broke away from Young Friends elements early in 1946 to embrace the moderates, conservatives and Korean nationalists among Ch'ondokyo membership. Under the leadership of SIN Suk (申肅)⁹, the National Assistance Party has taken a stand in opposition to extreme leftist influence in the Ch'ondokyo and has attempted to reunite sectarian strength through a reversion to the essentially religious ideal on which the sect is based. Support has been given to northern members of the Ch'ondokyo who have fled to the South to escape political persecution by the Religious Control Office. The name of the party was changed in late March 1949 to the Man-hwa Hoe (萬化會 literally the Change Everything Society).¹⁰

Ch'ondokyo, the "Religion of the Heavenly Way," had an antecedent, the Donghak (東學 "The Eastern School of Thought"), conceived eighty years ago as a purely Korean counterpart of western Christianity. Based upon a conglomeration of Oriental philosophies, the movement took a political turn toward the end of the nineteenth century which resulted in persecution by the Yi Dynasty, and virtual extinction. However, during the early part of the Japanese occupation, the movement was revived, splitting into three groups. One of these, which looked upon the founder CH'OE Su-won as the Spiritual Father, became the Ch'ondo Sect, dedicated to the doctrine of "subjecting life to Heaven's will." Following active participation in the 1919 Independence movement, the sect was split into two factions, named the Blue Army Alliance (青軍同盟) and the Red Army Alliance (紅軍同盟):

After the liberation the two factions were temporarily merged, then separated again because of divergent political views. The Young Friends Party attracted members from among the leftists and youth of the sect, earlier represented by the Red Army Alliance, while the National Assistance Party gained the support of more conservative members, many of whom had formerly adhered to the Blue Army Alliance.

Currently, the Young Friends Party is one of the three major political parties in North Korea, offering something of a middle course between the North Korea Labor Party and the Chosun Democratic Party, which was founded by CHO Man-sik. Regarded by Koreans as an entirely indigenous movement, the Young Friends Party has retained the generally good reputation of the Ch'ondokyo; the party leaders are now using this reputation for their political advantage.

25X1A 1 [REDACTED] Comment. Age about 50; a leader of the party in South Korea from the time of the formation early in 1946 until early 1948, when he went to Pyongyang; a chairman of the Democratic People's Front; reportedly a close associate of PAK Han-yung.

25X1A 2 [REDACTED] Comment. Long-time Ch'ondokyo leader; vice-chairman of the first session

[REDACTED] Independence movement and later in anti-Japanese work among intellectual and youth groups in Korea.

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25X1A

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

-3-

- 25X1A ⁴ Comment. During the occupation, he was chief of public relations and political affairs, New Progressive Party; representative of the Young Friends Party in the Democratic People's Front; and chief of the Political Department, Council of All Political Parties and Social Organizations for the US-USSR Joint Commission---all leftist organizations.
- 25X1A ⁵ Comment. Attended the North-South conference in Pyongyang in April 1948, representing the southern branch of the Young Friends Party.
- 25X1A ⁶ Comment. Though the characters are identical with those of a Korean National Assemblyman from Cholla Pukto, it is not certain whether this is the same man.
- 25X1A ⁷ Comment. The date of this resolution is questionable. There has been no previous indication that the idea of a unification front was conceived or acknowledged by South Korean organizations prior to early May 1949.
- 25X1A ⁸ Comment. The police have forced Young Friends Party leaders to shift their "base of operations" several times.
- 25X1A ⁹ Comment. SIN Suk was the former head of the Korean Immigrants' Association in Manchuria; member of the Interim Legislative Assembly and of the Coalition Council.
- 25X1A ¹⁰ Comment. Another source states that the Manhwa Hoe is a vehicle for expressing the views of the Young Friends Party and the National Assistance Party members. Through the efforts of SIN Suk, former leaders of the Young Friends Party, such as YI Ung-chin and UI Tan, have shown a desire for consolidating Ch'ondokyo membership under some sort of compromise standard. KIM Ki-chon and other more rabid leaders cannot be expected to go along with this.

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